



Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 21, 2020 ♦ 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting:

NOTICE: This virtual meeting of the Urban Forestry Commission was held pursuant to and in compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Section 2.2-3708.2 and state and local legislation adopted to allow for continued government operation during the COVID-19 declared emergency.

All participating members of the Urban Forestry Commission were present at this meeting through electronic means. All members of the public may view this video of this meeting on the City's website at www.fallschurchva.gov/UFC

Attendees

UFC members: Dennis Szymanski, Kathy Philpott Costa, David DeCoste, David Braun, Amy Crumpton

UFC City Staff Liaisons: Charles Prince

City Council Liaison:

UFC Student Representative: Dylan Petrillo

City Staff: Celeste Heath

Members of the Public: Bruce Byers, Linda Kamel, Kate Reich, Dylan Petrillo, John T.

Meeting Minutes and Supporting Documents (linked)

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Reading of Virtual Meeting Notice**
- 3. Roll Call**
- 4. Approval of the [September Urban Forestry Commission Minutes](#) - Approved**
- 5. Public Comments**
 - a. Public comments were received by the City of Falls Church and subsequently sent to the UFC members regarding the Fellows Property. Those comments are summarized below:
 - i. Stacy Evers: Advocated leaving the property as undeveloped as possible, but establishing trails through the wooded area. Strongly advocated for a community garden, encouraging environmental and social stewardship, providing educational opportunities throughout the space, and creating a city group to maintain the site.

- ii. Laurence Dorr: expressed concern about the reduction of trees in the city and encouraged the UFC to speak out against development.
 - iii. Peng Highnam - Advocated for protecting the trees on the property, especially the Sourwood tree which can be difficult to grow.
 - iv. Bruce Byers: He's involved with "Friends of Fellows Forest" and it recommends protection of the diverse mature canopy trees, natural understory and relatively undisturbed soil conditions. The City could add permeable-surface walking paths and benches. Kiosks for educational purposes could also be installed. Mr. Byers essentially suggests keeping the property "as is" until a more comprehensive plan is determined.
 - v. Lisa Barnett: With the decline of wildlife sighting, she's concerned that further destruction of the Fellows property will exacerbate this trend. Additionally, she's concerned about the impact that deforestation could have on stormwater management.
 - vi. Linda Kamel: She essentially suggests keeping the property as a natural forest; minimizing development to benches and tree signs while possibly adding historical signs of indigenous peoples that lived in the area.
 - vii. Shirley Connuck- Doesn't want to see any more trees removed, but rather would like to see trees being planted at Fellows Property.
- b. Comment from Charles Prince: A tree is being removed, but it is due to a safety issue. Charles also noted that part of the property has been cleared of trees because they were growing on top of stormwater mitigation.
 - c. Amy Crumpton offered up her understanding of the community garden concept submitted by Stacey Evers. The garden would be one communal area, not separate plots tended by individual gardeners. Stacey is well connected to the master gardener and local urban ag community to raise volunteers to caretake the project and use it as an educational space for TJ Elementary students. Potential site for the garden might be in the front SE corner (near Fellows Court) or in the area where trees have been removed. Access to the well water would have to be factored in. The Habitat Restoration Task Group has entertained suggesting a version of this idea which would be to plant fruiting native trees and shrubs that could demonstrate species homeowners might plant in their own yards and illustrate the forest as a food system. Questions that were raised: Could the Fellows Property feature native and diverse trees and plants that could be fruit bearing for humans and animals? Could it be a more formal urban agriculture that gets tended? Could we get volunteers to aid with the Fellows property?.
 - d. Input from the UFC: David Braun was against using the space for urban agriculture and would like to prohibit bicycles from this area. Dave DeCoste suggested considering the space as an education resource for urban forestry and stormwater management.
 - e. John T (present in the meeting) a member of Friends of the Fellows Forest - stated that it would be desirable to plant enough trees to connect the clearing between the front and the back of the property to provide more cover for wildlife. The space could be used for educational purposes which may require adding pathways. After hearing a comment about some citizens' desires for a dog park, he clarified that he didn't want to

inadvertently give the impression that he is in favor of that space being converted to a dog park, but was okay with dogs being allowed there.

- f. Amy Crumpton raised two issues: The property currently has a red oak specimen tree registered with the City and the sourwood mentioned by Peng Highnam is an excellent candidate for specimen status. She suggested identifying potential specimen tree candidates on the property and register them if they meet the requirements. Secondly, as the park planning process proceeds, would it be appropriate to ask Falls Church Parks and Rec to erect temporary signage, particularly regarding leash law and no biking, to help remind visitors that the space should be treated similar to other parks? Dennis Szymanski: Can VPIS or another organization help fund potential signage until the City has an official plan?
 - g. Charles will be meeting with Parks and Rec to discuss the current status of the Fellows Property. Amy C. pointed out that there may also be a contingency that is advocating for this property to be converted to a dog park.
 - h. Kathy Philpott Costa asked about the value of the site as it relates to stormwater management and wanted more information on the space proposed for urban agriculture. Charles stated that it would probably be best to keep it as natural as possible. He also encouraged meeting participants to send comments to the City and Parks and Rec prior to their 11/4/20 meeting.
6. **Staff Updates/Informational Items**
- **Fellows Property Discussion** (addressed above during public comments)
7. **Current Business**
- **Memorial Planting for Councilmember Sze:** Charles raised this topic and wanted to open it up for discussion. Charles suggested planting several trees along Parker Ave. as a memorial planting for Dan and uses it as an educational park; Big Chimney Park was discussed as an option since Dan Sze was instrumental in its refurbishment. Broad/Washington Park was also mentioned as a possible site since Dan was instrumental in getting voluntary concession (VC) funding for trees on that property. Another idea was a Sze memorial which was not a tree, but a circle or bench that could be used as a mini-amphitheatre / educational area. One concern raised was selecting a location that has a long lead time as the significance of the memorial will wane with time. The UFC agreed that a memorial is a good idea, but if we decide to create a memorial, it will need to be maintained and this should be added / budgeted.
 - **Insight Project at Broad and Washington** - The UFC discussed several ideas how to make the best use of this meeting time. One idea was to receive the developer presentation prior to the meeting. This will give the UFC time to submit questions to the developer prior to the meeting, based on our review of the presentation. Another suggestion: the UFC should update the [draft worksheet](#) that poses standard questions the UFC should ask during developer meetings? The UFC identified some initial questions: 1) how much ground-level public green space is accessible (many proposals include rooftop greenspaces for residents only), 2) what is the % of canopy coverage, and 3) what is the

greenspace coverage. The team agreed to update the [draft worksheet](#) so we can pose these questions to the developer prior to the November meeting so that those topics will be addressed in lieu of receiving the standard marketing presentation.

- [Narrative Statement](#)

- [Conceptual Plan](#)

- [Architectural Package](#)

8. **Future Business**

- Meeting times: The UFC discussed changing the meeting start time to 7 p.m. instead of 7:30 p.m. Charles will follow up with the City Clerk.

- School outdoor maintenance: The UFC discussed the status of the city's working with the FCCPS schools to improve outdoor maintenance at the schools. Charles will contact Seve in facilities to see how the city services can assist.

- City Code changes - Charles will be able to provide an update at the next meeting. Currently, it appears that this topic is a low priority with the City.

Urban Forestry Management Plan - Amy asked if the UFC should develop tasks and deadlines to continually work toward a draft document to share and be reviewed by City staff and other committees. These plans can take multiple years to write and finalize.

- Recurring topics: Kathy suggested that we move recurring topics - i.e., City Code changes, Urban Forestry Management Plan - to the future business section of the UFC monthly agenda so that they do not "fall off" our list of action items.

- Legislative request: What is the timing for legislative requests that the UFC should deliver to City Council so we can have a "voice" in Richmond? Celeste Heath (present in the meeting) stated that we should send this information to Cindy Mester, FC Assistant City Manager. Normally, Cindy begins compiling this information after the new year. The UFC will add this item to the annual calendar so we can revisit it yearly.

Discuss future successor for the UFC Chair position.

9. **Adjourn**

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